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Missionary Giving

in the

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Missionary Giving in the Sunday School

"MONEY, money, money, always begging for money!" If a user of this oft repeated phrase should chance to pick up this leaflet let him read on without fear for he will not be asked for a gift through these pages. And as for wanting money, who doesn't? Does the reader profess to be beyond the desire for more cash? And does he know of any organization, political, social, commercial, philanthropic, or religious, that does not need money? The person who is on the "inside" of any of these organizations knows the financial demands. You know the needs of the Church because you are one of its dependable members. The writer does not think that the Church asks for money any oftener than the club or other organization, but if it does, may it not be because its program and mission are much larger? Think this over and see if the Church is not worth a thousand times more than it costs.

Results of Training. But look at this question from another viewpoint. The conditions existing during any generation are due in a large part to the influences that have been handed

down from the past. The financial condition of the Church today is a result of the training or lack of training of the last generation. The giving in the future will result from the training or lack of training of the present. Thus missionary givers in the Sunday School of today will be a tremendous factor in the Church of tomorrow. Christ gave his followers a great task, to which they have responded altogether too slowly. When compared with the past, great progress has been made during this century, but when compared with the need and opportunity only a beginning has been made. In the early days of his ministry in India, our first missionary, William Butler, asked for one hundred missionaries. That was about sixty years ago, and the Methodist Episcopal Church has only ninety-eight male missionaries in India today (excluding Burma). The next generation must be more responsive to Christ's program. So far as Methodism is concerned the answer lies with the 4,000,000 teachers and scholars of the Sunday School of today.

Immediate Results. But the Sunday School is also a factor, and a very large factor, in present day financial problems. The greatest benevolent organizations of our Church have built up large portions of their work on the gifts of the Sunday School. These gifts are scattered all over our homeland, and in our foreign mission fields. A total of $5,292,154 has been con-

tributed during the past ten years, and the annual offering now approximates $600,000.

A Twofold Aim. In developing a plan of missionary giving in the Sunday School, two objectives, therefore, must be kept in mind; the immediate needs of those treasuries which have depended upon the Sunday School for funds to propagate their work, and the development of such habits of giving that even larger resources will be available in the future.

GIVING AND CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Leaders in religious education are attaching increased significance to the question of giving in the Sunday School. They would have us ask for money not only because the cause needs it, but because the child needs to give it. Getting money is not an aim of the Sunday School but is a part of the process by which the benevolent and altruistic elements of Christian character are developed. It is also a part of the worship of the Sunday School. Christians of all ages need to realize more fully that worship consists of more than prayer, scripture and song. Included with these are thanksgiving, the offering of money and the dedication of life. If proof is needed the scriptures supply it amply.

Immediate vs. Ultimate Results. The pressure of immediate need is ever present. The

benevolent boards are in distress and in seeking to respond it is easy to lose sight of ultimate and equally important ends. Missionary money may be secured in large sums by methods which will cheapen the whole missionary enterprise and in the end do more harm than good. The Church has accomplished much but viewed from the standpoint of possibilities has not been overly successful in developing benevolent Christians. The large sums given are small compared to the vast development of wealth, the greatly increased expenditures for luxuries, and the multiplying opportunities to bring the entire world to Christ. It behooves the Church to study carefully and immediately the whole question of training future generations in Christian benevolence. Christian character is more important than money and if once properly developed will result in fuller treasuries than we can ever expect to have by appealing to other motives.

Dangers to Avoid. The chief danger to be avoided then is the employment of methods which may bring large and immediate results, but results which are not based on conviction or reality. Healthy rivalry between classes and individuals may be carried so far that it becomes unhealthy. Money that goes into the missionary treasury just to get ahead of some other class, with no concern for the object to which it is to be devoted, cannot be used largely of God and will be a positive harm to the giver. Giving that is purchased

by prizes is unwholesome, and should be discouraged. There is no surer way of deadening future missionary interest.

Early Development of Selfishness. Every parent and every observer of child life knows that many children early develop a sense of ownership and are selfish about the use of their effects by others. The wise mother early attempts to remove selfishness. She insists that the candy be passed to all in the room and that the toys be shared with playmates. It is necessary that the same policy be maintained in matters of kindly service and in the giving of money. The same mother who has her boy share his candy sometimes puts a damper on his generous decision to give largely of the money that is his own. This is a mistake. There may be danger of children failing to appreciate the value of money and they may learn to spend too much for foolish pleasures, but there is no evidence that there are many who are trained to be too generous towards the Church.

Habit Formation. It is impossible to begin the formation of right habits too early in life, including habits of giving. A boy soon finds a hundred ways to spend his money and the habit of giving to the Church should begin the day he first goes to Sunday School. The custom of giving children an allowance or helping them to earn money is growing. It is wise, in fact almost necessary, that the gifts to the Sunday School be

made from the child's own money if he is to benefit from the gift. Only in doing so will the gift be really his. If father supplies the Sunday School money for a boy of five, he will be permitted to continue as long as the parent is willing. In some cases boys or girls depend upon the parent to attend to all benevolent matters even after they begin to earn their own income.

METHODS OF GIVING

Bible Methods. The only method by which the Church will ever be adequately financed is the Bible method. The Bible method is sensible and is the business method which we apply to all our other financial obligations. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." I Cor. 16:2. This giving is Unanimous—every one of you; Systematic—on the first day of the week; Proportionate—as God hath prospered him. Every child should be taught to give something. Few are so poor that they do not have a few cents to spend. They should also be taught to give regularly. Most people would find it difficult to pay the grocer once a year or the rent annually. The system of annual subscriptions and gifts to current expenses and to benevolences will hold the Church in chains so long as it exists. Break the chains, if possible, with adults, but be certain that they never bind the children.

They should be taught to give proportionately. The gifts should increase with the allowance, otherwise a two cents a week basis may be continued through life. Every element in this Bible method is practical for Sunday School use.

A Worthy Example. Is it not true that most of our great givers began to give when young, following the Bible method? Certainly many of them did. One illustration may help us see the way it worked out. Many years ago William Colgate, a lad of 16 years, left home to seek his fortune. He carried all his worldly possessions in his hand. As he trudged along, he met an old neighbor, the captain of a canal-boat; and then the following conversation took place:

"Well, William, where are you going?"

"I don't know," he answered; "father is too poor to keep me at home any longer, and says I must now make a living for myself."

"There's no trouble about that," said the captain. "Be sure you start right and you'll get along finely."

William told his friend that the only trade he knew anything about was soap and candle making, at which he had helped his father while at home.

"Well," said the old man, "let me pray with you once more, and give you a little advice, and then I will let you go."

They both kneeled down upon the tow-

path, the dear old man prayed earnestly for William, and then gave this advice: "Some one will soon be the leading soap-maker in New York. It can be you as well as any one. I hope it may. Be a good man; give your heart to Christ; give the Lord all that belongs to Him of every dollar you earn; make an honest soap; give a full pound; and I am certain you will yet be a prosperous and rich man."

When the boy arrived in the city he found it hard to get work. He was lonesome and far from home, but he remembered his promise to the old captain, and the first dollar he earned brought up the question of the Lord's part. He soon decided that ten cents of every dollar were sacred to the Lord.

Having regular employment, he soon became a partner; and after a few years the sole owner of the business. He made an honest soap, gave a full pound, and instructed his bookkeeper to open an account with the Lord, and carry one-tenth of all his income to that account. He prospered; his business grew; his family was blessed; his soap sold, and he grew rich faster than he had ever hoped. He then gave the Lord two-tenths, and prospered more than ever; then he gave three-tenths; then four-tenths; then five-tenths.

He educated his family, settled all his plans for life, and gave all his income to the Lord. He prospered more than ever.

This is the story of Mr. William Colgate, who has given millions of dollars to the Lord's cause, and left a name that will never die.

A System Necessary. The large sums which have gone annually into the treasuries of our benevolent boards from the Sunday School, have been given largely as a result of a systematic plan of monthly offerings. That plan should be continued until a better one is discovered. It should also be strengthened in every possible way.

Subscription Cards. The use of subscription cards for missions is being introduced with success in many places. A subscription basis is necessary in carrying on the work of the Church, and there are many reasons why it can be introduced with profit in the Sunday School. It certainly will help reach the twofold aim outlined in this leaflet. By insisting that children consult their parents before subscribing, the objectionable features of the plan can be overcome.* A Superintendent writes: "We have used the subscription cards in our school for two years. Almost every member above the primary department subscribes on a monthly basis. Most subscriptions are met in a businesslike way, payments are made when returning from absence and the whole plan meets with general approval." The Elm Park Sunday School of Scranton, Pa.,

*See "Missionary Education in the Sunday School."

reports an average annual gift of over seventy cents per capita as the result of the use of pledge cards and monthly offerings.

The Monthly Envelope System. The experience of most Sunday Schools shows that an envelope of some kind is most valuable. It is a great aid to system in giving, tends constantly to remind one of the obligation, and is a convenient method of paying and receiving credit. A monthly envelope for the missionary offering for each month of the year is available and has been used with great success.* The Rev. A. R. Williams, of Oskaloosa, Kansas, writes: "Have been using monthly missionary envelopes for a year. Offerings quadrupled. The plan is O. K. when well worked. Send me supplies for a Sunday School of one hundred and seventy-five scholars."

Annual Missionary Day. Many of our most prominent Sunday Schools lay great emphasis upon an annual missionary day at which time the entire period is devoted to missions. In many schools Easter is the time selected, in others it is the last missionary Sunday of the conference year. Class offerings or pledges are received at this time which supplement the regular offerings. It is a time for missionary education, for summing up the work of the year and for inspiration for larger things.

*See "Missionary Education in the Sunday School."

The Duplex Envelope. A few Sunday Schools are experimenting with the duplex envelope. It is becoming the recognized envelope for church use, and the question is naturally raised: Why teach the child one method in the Sunday School and another in the Church? Special duplex envelopes for the Sunday School are available, and samples will be furnished upon request. St. John's Methodist Sunday School, New Rochelle, New York, adopted the duplex envelope to be used by members who chose to do so. It is used by almost all members of the Junior Department. The receipts from that department for the month of August, 1913, were $10.81, as compared with $3.66 for August, 1912, or a gain of 295 per cent.

Correlating Church and Sunday School Giving. The use of the duplex envelope in the Sunday School raises the question of the relation of the giving of the Church and Sunday School. Should the Sunday School support itself, or should it be supported by the Church? This question has long been discussed. In theory many say that the Church should support the School; in practice, most Schools support themselves. Here is an opportunity for progressive Schools to experiment. Let the cost of sustaining the Sunday School be made a part of the budget of the Church, and let every member of the Sunday School be informed concerning the reasons why money is needed for the support of

the Church and the benevolent organizations and be canvassed the same as any church member, and be given the duplex envelope. Let the envelopes be given through the Sunday School or through the Church as the giver may choose. Would the result be decreased gifts? Probably not, but in any case would not one result be a closer relation between the Sunday School and Church? It would be easier to impress the fact that the Sunday School is a part of the Church, and children would be giving to the Church from the first, and would naturally continue.

Giving and Worship. Reference was made on page 5 to the relation of giving to worship. That paragraph was written with a conviction that our Sunday School financial methods must be relieved of many of the unwise and harmful customs that have developed in the past, and made a part of worship for the sake of both the child and the collection. So far as actual results in receipts were concerned, it was all theory. The following experience of the Junior Department of a New Jersey Sunday School was learned therefore with great pleasure. A new superintendent was appointed to this department. A first step was to adopt a policy to the effect that there should be no competition between classes, and no announcements of amounts given, either by classes or the department as a whole. Giving was placed on the plane of worship. The scripture offering service, printed in the

Junior Department Program No. 1 was introduced. The class treasurers brought the offering to the front and stood there during the service, which closed with prayer. This made the giving of the school a real part of worship. In the six months following the average offering increased from 99 cents to $2.84 and the missionary offering to $3.65. In addition to this the children gave $30.18 as a Christmas gift to the poor and $5.16 to the flood sufferers.

Conclusions. The financial results of our plan of missionary giving in the Sunday School are easily tabulated. As was indicated in the beginning, the total approximates nearly $600,000 annually. It is a large total but means a per capita giving of only fifteen cents annually, or one and one-quarter cents per month. The spiritual results cannot be tabulated but they are doubtless large. And yet who would say that Methodist Episcopal Sunday Schools can do no more? The fact that some schools *have* indicates that others *can.* Should we not increase this per capita record immediately and can we not hope and pray and work for a generation of Christians more fully devoted to the coming of the Kingdom? Such is the task and such the privilege of our generation.

Correspondence

Correspondence concerning any phase of missionary education and giving in the Sunday School may be addressed to the Board of Sunday Schools, 1018 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, or to the Department of Missionary Education, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York City.